



# EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AGENCY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

## **Supporting the Mental/Behavioral Health Needs of Hospital and Clinic Staff in Los Angeles County During the Ebola Response (HPP Grant Programs) - October 27, 2014**

Though there have been no confirmed cases in Los Angeles County, hospital and clinic staff are understandably concerned regarding Ebola. Therefore, it is important for hospitals and clinics to address the emotional needs of all staff by integrating mental/behavioral health strategies into health preparedness and response efforts during this time. Below are some strategies that your facility can use now to support the mental health and reassurance needs of staff:

### **1. Implement Your Crisis Communication Plan:**

- Use *proactive* strategies to provide credible information to all staff and their families.
- Include Employee Health, Social Work, and Spiritual Care staff in communication planning meetings.
- Communicate regularly and proactively with all staff and all shifts whenever there are alarming media stories or rumors.
- Consider the unique information needs of non-medical staff.
- Address the information needs of visitors to your facility.
- Add more accessible opportunities for staff to ask questions and discuss fears such as:
  - Send infection control and other appropriate staff to walk around your facility to talk informally with staff and provide reassurance.
  - Consider setting up a hotline or informal “drop in” information center in the cafeteria or other location that is easily accessible to staff.

### **2. Increase the Frequency of Meetings, Training, and Exercise of Ebola Protocols:**

- Conduct regular meetings, training, and visible drills such as donning and doffing PPE, reviewing Ebola protocols and checklists. These tangible strategies have the additional benefit of providing emotional reassurance to staff that your facility *is taking every precaution possible*.

### **3. Be Ready to Provide Behavioral/Mental Health Support:**

- Review the *Preparing Hospitals and Clinics for the Psychological Consequences of a Terrorist Incident or Other Public Health Emergency* training.
- Provide staff mental health resiliency training: *Anticipate, Plan and Deter: Maximizing Resilience for Healthcare Workers*
- Add the HICS position – *Employee Health and Well Being Unit Leader with PsySTART Staff Triage Component*– to oversee the health and mental health support of employees if you activate your Incident Command.
- Monitor the traumatic and cumulative response stress of your staff using the *PsySTART Staff Self-Triage System* forms.
- Develop strategies for follow up assistance, including engaging your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide counseling to staff who are particularly fearful as well as who were directly impacted by Ebola (ie; involved in patient treatment, became ill, were quarantined, or experienced the death of loved ones in the US or abroad).
- In the event of a surge of patients – consider adding the *HICS Mental Health Unit Leader with PsySTART Disaster Mental Health and PsySTART Triage Manager* positions in your ICP and use *PsySTART*.

**(See the EMS Agency website, Disaster Medical Services - Resource Documents section or contact Sandra Shields to assist you with the above Hospital Preparedness Program grant resources at (562) 347-1648 or [sanshields@dhs.lacounty.gov](mailto:sanshields@dhs.lacounty.gov))**